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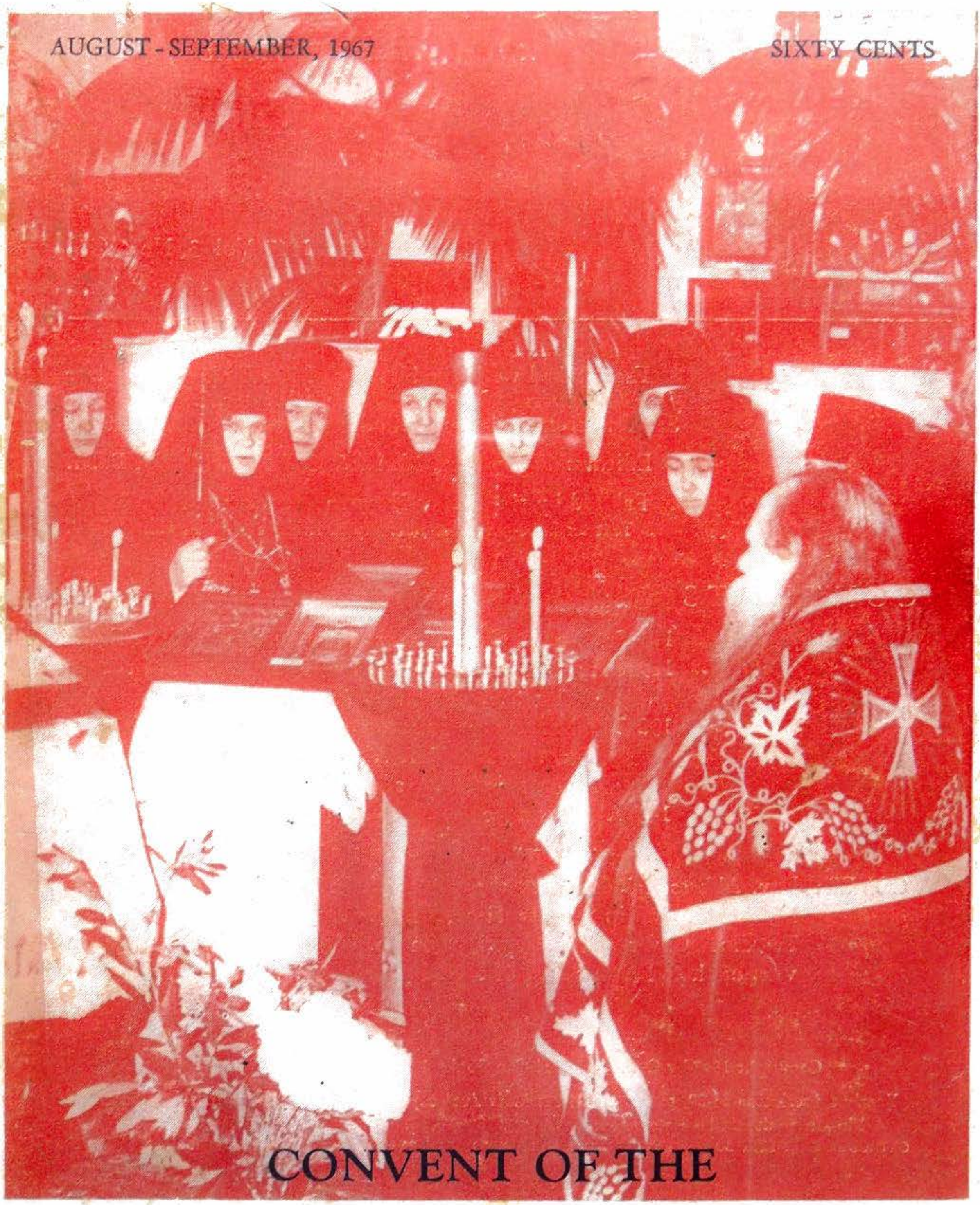

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SAINT MENAS

GREAT MARTYR AND WONDERWORKER OF EGYPT

The Just Shall Be in Everlasting Remembrance.
Communion verse.

INTRODUCTION

FROM the 4th to the 13th centuries, the Shrine of St. Menas near Alexandria was one of the major holy places of Christendom, and pilgrims journeyed there from the entire Christian world to venerate the holy Relics of the Saint. The pottery flasks in which were dispensed to the pilgrims the miraculous oil from the lamps above the Saint's Relics as well as water from the holy well at the site, both of which through the prayers of the Saint possessed extraordinary curative powers, have been found not only in Egypt and areas which once composed Byzantium, but in such distant places as Ireland and France. Indeed, the universal popularity of the Saint testifies to the exceptional number of miracles wrought through his intercession. In Byzantium many churches were erected under his heavenly patronage, and in the West churches were dedicated to him as far away as Rome and Cologne.

Although devotion to the Saint seems to have died out entirely among the heterodox Christians of the West, it remains very much alive among Orthodox people, especially the Greeks, the main church of Herakleion on Crete as well as that of Chios both being dedicated to the Saint. Relics of St. Menas are among the many holy relics treasured by the monks at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, and among the

long-suffering and much-persecuted Greek faithful of Asia Minor (Turkey), where St. Menas spent much of his life and where his martyrdom took place, he is held in especially deep veneration, as he is also by the Greek population of Alexandria. Noted for his healing of various sicknesses and his saving of those possessed by demons, as well as for his powers of protection, especially in time of war and on the sea, his intercession is also greatly valued for the finding of lost objects. Nor is it only among the Orthodox that the Saint continues to be venerated. He remains a saint of major importance among the regrettably Monophysite Coptic Christians of Egypt and Abyssinia, where many ancient churches exist in his honor.

The Byzantine Emperor Arcadios (395-408) built a magnificent church of immense proportions at the Tomb of the Saint. Sheeted with rare marble of various colors, this ediface had 56 columns with richly-carved capitals supporting the roof. The shrine containing the holy Relics was located in the center of the building in a crypt which was entered by descending a marble staircase; above the Body of the Saint burned a number of oil lamps. Around the church a whole community, much like a small city, gradually arose, with guest-houses and innumerable shops to accommodate the constant crowds of pilgrims, as well as barracks for the large contingent of soldiers stationed there to protect the Shrine and the pilgrims from Bedouins and others.

After the Moslem conquest of Egypt, fewer and fewer Christian pilgrims came from Byzantium and the West to venerate the holy Relics of St. Menas. In 836 the church was dismantled by infidels who took the costly marble for their own use; but the holy Body of the Saint was left undisturbed. Soon after this, the church was rebuilt, although on a more modest scale than before, and sometime during the next two centuries certain Egyptian Moslems established a mosque at the site, next to the church, just as was done on Mt. Sinai, Moslem pilgrims as well as Christian coming to pray at the Shrine of the Saint.

In the 11th century, the church and pilgrim city were still flourishing, but sometime during the 13th or 14th centuries, the Shrine and the city of St. Menas were abandoned and soon fell into ruins -- the victim of earthquakes or of barbarians or of the black plague; no one actually knows. Before long even the ruins, ravaged by the constant and fierce winds of the region, disappeared beneath the sands. And thus they remained hidden for over 500 years, until the area was excavated in 1905, when the ruins were exposed to view.

SAINT MENAS STANDING WITH THE SAVIOUR
A 6th-century icon from St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai

The earliest surviving representations of the Saint are those on the clay flasks in which the thaumaturgic oil and water were dispensed to the pilgrims. On these he is always shown with two camels. In more recent times, however, icons of St. Menas generally represent him attired as a warrior, often on horseback, with one hand holding a Cross and the other a sword or a shield. Frequently a sun-image is represented on his shield or on his shoulder armor. Such icons of St. Menas are frequently seen in Orthodox churches, especially in Greece, Asia Minor, and the Holy Land. A large icon of the Saint, which has some offerings attached to it commemorating individual miracles, cannot but impress the pilgrim today in the church at Bethlehem, directly opposite the stairway leading down to the Cave of the Nativity of Christ.

The Feast of St. Menas, the Great Martyr and Wonderworker of Egypt, is celebrated by the Church on November 11 (24), the day of his martyrdom, which occurred in the year 296.

THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF ST. MENAS IN BOSTON

18th century icon from Procopion in Asia Minor.
At the bottom are scenes from the Saint's Martyrdom. At the top, the Savior bestows His Blessing on one side, and on the other, an angel bestows the unfading martyric wreath.

THE LIFE OF THE HOLY
GREAT MARTYR MENAS

As derived from the Greek Life by St. Simeon the Translator
as well as from Egyptian Sources

ST. MENAS LIVED DURING THE THIRD CENTURY and was a native of Egypt, although most of his life was spent in the Kotyaeion region of Phrygia (the present Turkish Kutahya) where he served, from early manhood, in the Imperial Army, attaining the rank of officer. A devout Orthodox Christian and an exemplary soldier, he was known to many and his name much-praised. Not only was his handsome appearance and strength outstanding, but also his sweetness of disposition, his self-discipline, his patience, and his concern for the afflicted. Having fought bravely in many battles against various marauding barbarians, his record was one of long and outstanding military service.

But one year the Emperor Maximian issued a decree which ordered everyone to worship the false gods and commanded the soldiers serving in the Imperial legions to capture and persecute the Orthodox Christians. No sooner did he hear that ungodly command than the righteous Menas cast off his soldier's belt (at that time a sign of military rank), and went up a mountain that was above Kotyaeion and made his abode there in the wilderness where he embraced the life of an ascetic and lived and worked like a peasant. Thus remaining for a long period of time in the wilderness, suffering great privations and toiling much in prayer, fasting, and the keeping of night vigils, the Blessed Menas, with the help of God, purified himself of every passion of soul and body. And when his heart had been strengthened with godly zeal and his soul inflamed with Divine Love, the Grace of God came upon him and he beheld a vision which he understood to be an indication that it was time

for him to enter the arena of Martyrdom. Hence, he came down from the mountain and went into the city and into the midst of the unbelievers who were gathered together for a pagan festival.

Standing in the midst and inspired by the Holy Spirit, St. Menas, who by that time was some fifty years old and had a countenance worthy of reverence, said with a loud voice: "One alone is True God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As for your gods, they are but demons and senseless wood." All those who heard his voice left off with the dances and games of the idolatrous feast and gathered around him to see who it was, marvelling at the way in which he dared to present himself before such a multitude.

Seized by the idolators, the Saint was beaten by them and then dragged before the Prefect of the city, Pyrrhos, who was sitting upon a high throne in order to watch the spectacle. When he saw the holy Menas, he asked him who he was and inquired as to why he was creating a disturbance. "I am an Egyptian, a servant of Jesus Christ the Ruler of all things, am a soldier by profession, and nearly all my life have served in the Imperial Army," answered the Saint. "But because the emperor has chosen to follow the path of idolatry and to persecute the Orthodox Christians, I have chosen to dwell with lions in the wilderness rather than carry out the impious commands of those who know not God. Now I have come to confess before all that Christ is True God, for He Himself has said: *Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Who is in heaven* (St. Matthew 10:32). When the Prefect heard these things he was greatly angered and ordered the Saint imprisoned.

When the morning came the Prefect urged St. Menas to return to the Imperial Military Service, saying that then the Emperor and the gods would forgive him, and even that his former rank would be restored to him and many new honors bestowed on him. But the holy Menas refused, saying: "I am a soldier in the service of the Divine Emperor Christ Who is the Great King of all things, both seen and unseen, on the earth and in the heavens." And the Prefect ordered that he be stretched out on the earth, tied to four posts, and then beaten unmercifully with straps of rawhide. At that time the Saint showed such endurance that it seemed as though another was being tortured; indeed, he appeared to be wholly rejoicing. And all marvelled... Then they tied him, stretched high upon a post, and scraped his body with iron claws until his entrails appeared. When this terrible torture had been carried out, the Prefect mocked the Saint, but the holy Menas said: "O mindless one, do

you think that with such childish games you will turn me from my Faith?" Still, Pyrrhos urged: "Leave off this obstinacy, O Menas, and submit to the gods and the great Emperor Maximian." But the Saint answered: "You exhort me to submit to false illusionary gods and to a corruptible earthly king. But I will never deny the Heavenly King and One True God Who gives breath and life to all creation, and Who both gave to and has authority over earthly kings."

Becoming more and more angered, Pyrrhos devised ever more cruel methods of torture. But still the Holy Menas rejoiced, saying: "Today I put off the fleshly tunics of sin and put on the radiant garment of the Kingdom of God. I have Christ as my Helper, Who said that we should not fear those that kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (St. Matthew 10:28). Hearing these words, the Prefect said: "Tell me, O Menas, whence has such knowledge of letters come to you, who as a soldier were accustomed to wars and slaughter, that you are able to answer thus?" And the Saint, being made wise by God, answered: "My God, the True Wisdom of the Father, has made me wise, O Prefect, so that I might confute godlessness. He has said: '*They shall lay hands on you and persecute you, and ye shall be brought before kings and rulers for My Name's sake. It shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your heart, not to meditate beforehand how ye shall answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand*' (St. Luke 21:12-15).

Then the Prefect became exceedingly wroth and commanded that four-pronged iron spikes be driven into the ground and that the Saint be dragged naked upon them for a long time. Yet, suffering all these things and much more, the holy Menas ever rejoiced, and Pyrrhos ordered that he be beheaded. When this was announced, many soldiers who had been friends of the Saint approached and coaxed him, saying: "Do not disdain us, O Menas. Remember your friends and your honor. Do not choose death and disdain this most sweet life. Change your mind. It still is not too late." But the holy Martyr said: "Flee from me, enemies of Christ. You should rather advise yourselves, that you might turn yourselves from the delusions of demons." And when they saw that they could not change his mind, the soldiers took him and led him outside the city to behead him, the Saint along the way beseeching certain friends, who were secret Christians, to take his body back to Egypt, the land of his birth.

Reaching the place of execution, Saint Menas lifted up his hands to heaven, saying: "I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Master and God,

that Thou hast deemed me worthy to become a partaker of Thy Sufferings and that Thou hast preserved me pure in confessing Thy Name. Receive my soul into Thy Kingdom."

Taking the holy and venerable body of the Saint, the idolators cast it into the fire. But it remained largely unconsumed by the flames, and secret Christians took it, wrapped it in winding sheets and myrrh, and kept it in a hidden place until the persecutions ceased. As for the blessed soul of the holy Menas, it was led by angels to a place of light and of peace, into the Presence of the Living God.

Some time later, the holy Relics of St. Menas were taken back to Egypt, as the Saint wished, by a batallion of soldiers under the command of one Athanasius, and on the voyage to Alexandria from Asia Minor some strange sea beasts with heads like camels and necks like serpents came up out of the sea, circled about the ship, and, stretching forth their necks into the ship, sought to snatch the terrified soldiers and seamen from the deck, one of the beasts even seeking to seize the casket-reliquary containing the holy body of St. Menas. But a holy fire came forth from the body of the Saint into the faces of the sea beasts which fled into the depths, the soldiers marvelling and glorifying God for the great holiness of St. Menas, who had saved them from so great a peril.[1]

Taking the Saint's holy body into battle with them, by his prayers the soldiers triumphed over the enemy troops on the shore of Lake Mareotis near Alexandria. If, to begin with, the soldiers had intended to leave the body of the Saint in Egypt as he had requested, they were apparently reluctant to do so when the actual time came for them to return to Phrygia. Thus, they contrived to take the body of the Saint back with them and to transport it to their ship at Alexandria, some 16 miles away. But when they set the Saint's holy body on the back of a camel, the animal, as though afflicted with an insupportable weight, could not rise from the ground. A second camel was brought and the holy Relics tied on its back, but it too sunk to its knees and would not rise from its place. And the soldiers knew that it was the Will of God and of His Great Saint and Martyr, Menas, that the body of the Saint remain in Egypt. Thus, they buried the Saint there and built a modest shrine over the site, the devout Athanasius having made "an icon of the Saint dressed as he had known him in the apparel of a soldier, with

1. Such sea beasts have apparently survived into modern times. In the memoirs of Simeon Yanovsky, a spiritual son of Fr. Herman of Alaska, there is a mention of an appearance in the vicinity of Unalaska of a similar huge snake-like sea beast whose head resembled that of a horse and whose neck was roughly estimated to be more than three and a half feet in diameter. Yanovsky is a very reliable source.

beasts which resembled camels shown at the feet, and they were worshiping him." And he laid the icon on the holy Relics of the Saint to obtain his prayers, and took it with him that it might be a means of deliverance and a refuge and protection on the sea and in war.

MIRACLES AND MANIFESTATIONS OF ST. MENAS

The Saint received grace from the Lord to work extraordinary miracles and help those in need. Of his many miracles, only a few are related here.

THE SAINT RESTORES A MURDERED MAN TO LIFE

A devout man from Constantinople was going to the Feast of St. Menas, and stopped to rest at an inn. The innkeeper, knowing that the stranger had money, arose at midnight and murdered him. Afterwards he dismembered the body and put the pieces in a basket which he hid inside the building. While the murderer was in agony as to how, when, and where he could dispose of the dismembered body so that no one would discover his terrible crime, behold, St. Menas appeared on horseback, dressed as a soldier, and began questioning him as to what had happened to the stranger who had come to rest there. The murderer assured him that he knew nothing of such a stranger. But the Saint got down from his horse, entered the inner part of the house, went straight to the hidden basket, and opening it up, gazed at the murderer with a fearsome and terrible gaze, asking, "Who is this?" Like one beside himself, the murderer became voiceless and threw himself at the feet of the Saint.

St. Menas carefully reassembled the dismembered body, and after fervent prayer raised up the dead man, who arose as out of a deep sleep, glorifying God and thanking and worshiping the Saint whose prayers had brought him back to life. Then, after severely chastising the trembling and repentant murderer, the Saint mounted his horse and vanished.

THE MIRACLE OF THE SILVER DISH AND THE LOST SLAVE

A certain rich Christian promised to give a silver dish to the church of the Saint, and ordered the silversmith to make him two silver dishes, with the name of the Saint inscribed on one and his own name on the other. After both had been made, seeing that the dish of the

Saint was the more beautiful of the two, the rich man kept that dish for himself without considering that the name of the Saint was engraved on it. One day while the rich man was traveling on a ship, his slave brought him some food in the dish of the Saint, and that senseless and impious Christian ate from the dish without any reverence. When the table had been cleared, the slave took the silver dish to wash it in the sea, and it slipped from his hands and fell into the water. Trying to grab it, the terrified slave also fell into the sea and disappeared beneath its surface. And when his master saw what had happened, he cried: "Woe unto me, wretch that I am! Because I coveted the dish of the Saint, together with it I have also lost my slave." And he made a vow to God that if he found even a remnant of his slave, he would give to St. Menas the value of both the silver dishes.

After he disembarked from the ship, he watched the coast, waiting and hoping to find the dead body of his slave. Suddenly, to his great astonishment, he saw his slave coming out of the sea alive, holding the Saint's silver dish in his hands, whereupon he cried out with a loud voice, proclaiming the miracle of thc Saint. And many persons gathered about, marveling greatly, and inquiring of the slave in what manner he had been delivered from the sea. The slave answered: "Immediately when I fell into the sea, there appeared three men of shining countenance. One of them, the eldest, was a soldier, the second was a handsome youth, and the third a deacon. They took me from the depths of the sea and walked with me yesterday and today until we arrived at this point." These three men who saved the slave from the sea were St. Menas, St. Victor, and St. Vincent the Deacon, who were all martyred on the same day, the eleventh of November -- St. Victor in the year 160, St. Vincent in 235, and St. Menas in 296.

THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN AND THE DUMB WOMAN

One time, a certain lame man and a dumb woman were staying in the church of the Saint together with many other sick persons in order to receive healing from the Saint. At midnight, while all were sleeping, the Saint appeared to the lame man and said: "Now that it is quiet,

go and take hold of the coat of the dumb woman and you shall be healed." And when the lame man did as the Saint had told him, the dumb woman became greatly alarmed and began shouting and accusing the lame man. In this humorous manner her tongue was loosened. The lame man, on the other hand, feeling shame because of her words, immediately rose to his feet and ran off with great speed. When they realized what a gladsome miracle had been worked for both of them by the Saint, they glorified God.

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEW

A certain Jew had a Christian friend to whom he often entrusted considerable sums of money when he was about to go to a distant place. One time he left him a purse containing 500 coins (nomismata). The Christian, tempted by the evil one, decided to deprive the Jew of his treasure. Therefore, when the Jew returned and asked for his money, the Christian did not give it to him, but said: "You did not leave anything with me this time. What are you asking of me?" Hearing this so unexpectedly, the Jew was beside himself, and when he had recovered from the shock, said to the Christian: "We must take an oath in order to dispel this doubt. Because I had confidence that you were a faithful and honest man, I had no witness present when I gave you the money." Hence the Jew requested that the one who was lying should be revealed, and they both went to the church of St. Menas. There, without hesitation, the dishonest Christian made a false oath denying that he had the money of the Jew. But after they left the church and rode off, the horse of the Christian became wild and unruly and threw him to the earth. Although he lost his kerchief and the key to his purse, he was not badly injured, and mounting the horse again, he resumed the journey together with the Jew. And when they came to a suitable place, they dismounted to eat a little bread.

When they had begun eating, behold, the Christian saw his servant coming and holding with one hand the purse of the Jew and with the other the lost key and kerchief. Seeing these things he said: "What is this?" The servant replied: "A certain fearsome man on horseback came to my mistress, gave her the key and kerchief and said: 'Send these together with the purse of the Jew in great haste.' Whereupon I came to you as ordered." And both the Christian and the Jew realized that the fearsome rider was St. Menas, the Great Martyr and

Wonderworker. Then the Jew, full of joy, returned with the repentant Christian to the church of St. Menas where he asked to become an Orthodox Christian and to receive Holy Baptism. As for the Christian, he tearfully repented of his theft, dishonesty, and false oath by which he had angered God. Thus, both received that which they sought: the Jew, Holy Baptism, and the Christian, forgiveness. And together they returned to their own homes, rejoicing over the great Mercy and Wisdom of God.

THE SAINT SAVES THE PEOPLE OF HERAKLEION

In the year 1826, during that time of terror, the Turks of Herakleion, Crete, devised a plan to slaughter the Orthodox Christians on the Feast of Pascha, April 18, when they would all be gathered together, unprepared to defend themselves, in the church of St. Menas. When the Sacred Liturgy had begun and the Gospel was being read, the maniacal swarm encircled the church and were ready to rush forward and begin the abominable work of slaughter. But suddenly a white-haired old man appeared among them, circling the church on horseback and pursuing them with a naked sword. Immediately the terrified barbarians were overcome by an incomprehensible fear and were turned to flight. Thus their diabolical plan was frustrated through the protection of the Great Martyr Menas. In their confusion, the Turks who planned the attack at first took the Saint to be the chief of the city notables and surmised that he had been ordered by the Turkish governor, for the sake of law and order, to prevent the slaughter. It turned out, however, that the governor knew nothing of the whole affair, and that the chief of the city notables had not left his house that night. Hence they understood that it was the miraculous intervention of St. Menas, the Patron of the city. The Turks themselves were the ones who made the miracle known, and from that time on they possessed great awe and reverence for the Saint, certain of them annually offering various gifts to his church.

Because of this great miracle of St. Menas, a council of the bishops of Crete later decreed that on the Tuesday of Bright Week there be celebrated annually, at the church where the miracle took place, a Feast to the glory of the Saint and the memory of the miracle. During this Feast (which is considered as a second yearly feast of the Patron Saint of Herakleion, St. Menas), immediately after Vespers there is brought forth the venerable and holy relic of the Saint which is kept there.

AN APPEARANCE OF THE SAINT IN OUR TIMES: EGYPT, 1942

Hearken to yet another most awesome miracle of the holy Great Martyr Menas, hearken that you may receive great joy. We all know what a dreadful position Greece was in during the Second World War, from the years 1939 to 1945. During that time Greece suffered the attack of incomparably stronger enemies. She fought boldly, and while she fought against the Italians, she was victorious. When, however, the Germans attacked her, Orthodox Greece yielded and was occupied. Then the remnants of the Greek military forces fled from captivity and crossed over to Egypt, the country of St. Menas, where they made up the corps of the reconstituted Greek Army and continued from there the struggle to free their motherland from the heterodox German invaders.

When the forces of Hitler with the renowned Rommel at their head, after having conquered practically all of North Africa, were heading for Alexandria and had reached El Alamein, they pitched camp there for the night and made preparations to attack the city in the morning. All the people of Alexandria and its environs were overcome with fear and awaited the horrors of bombardment, the fall of the city, and the inevitable terrors of an alien occupation. And for the Greeks, the triumph of Rommel in Egypt would have meant that Greece would lose the last remnants of her free army.

However, because St. Menas felt compassion for the suffering faithful of Orthodox Greece and for the people of his native land, Egypt, who honored his memory -- Greeks and Egyptians, Orthodox, Copts, and others, -- he did not allow the triumph of the Germans to come to pass. Indeed, who does not remember the famous Battle of El Alamein in 1942? The name El Alamein is an Arabic corruption of the name of St. Menas, there being found there the ruins of the great church of St. Menas in which remain, even today, many depictions of the various miracles of the Saint, including one which shows the holy Menas leading the camels of a caravan which he had saved from certain danger. Thus, at midnight, there on the desert at El Alamein, when the battle was about to begin -- certain believers clearly saw St. Menas coming out of his ancient church leading camels, exactly as depicted in the aforementioned fresco, and heading together with them into the camp of the Germans!

It is impossible to describe the panic which from that time overcame the formerly invincible German troops. Overcome by unexpected weakness and confusion, the forces of Rommel were put to flight, pursued, defeated, and taken prisoner by the Allied troops with whom the legions of Free Greeks were fighting. Who worked such a great miracle? Who else but the Holy Great Martyr Menas, our Protector!

Out of reverence for this miracle, even the heterodox Allies offered that place to the Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria in order that the church of the Saint might be rebuilt, and that there might be founded a monastery there in his name as a sign of everlasting gratitude to the Saint, and so that, because of the great miracle that was worked, God, Who is glorified in His Saints, might be hymned ceaselessly therein, together with His Holy Great Martyr St. Menas, by whose holy intercessions may we also be delivered from every occasion of affliction and be deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF ST. MENAS IN BOSTON

(*Illustrated, p. 116*)

How many people know that right here in America there is a miraculous icon of St. Menas? This holy icon belonged to the family of the pilgrim grandmother Macrina of Procopion (Cappadocia), Asia Minor. The icon was much revered, and many favors were granted by the Saint to the family. On one occasion they promised to make a silver cover (riza) for the icon, but a few years passed without the promise's being fulfilled. At that time one member of the family was a small boy. One day when his parents returned from the fields, he tried to tell them in his childish words that a rider had come on a horse and told him many things. The parents immediately became disturbed and thought that Janissaries were roaming the countryside in order to kidnap Christian children and rear them in their camp as fanatic Moslems, such being a common practice in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore the parents warned the child never to speak to anyone on a horse, but to hide whenever he saw a rider coming. But the child continued to see this rider, who would tell him: "Tell your parents to fulfill their promise." Only when the child told the parents one day that the rider had come galloping in the sky, and the horse had stood on the rooftop going *tak tak tak* with his hoof and whinnying, did they understand that he was not a Janissary

or any man of this earth, but that he was St. Menas, the Great Martyr of Egypt. Then they remembered the promise they had made. Thus they gave many silver ornaments to a silversmith, and from them he made the present cover for the icon.

The icon was once brought to Constantinople by descendents of the family. They hid it in a basket, covered with a napkin, and were going over the golden horn by ferry boat. Because of the press of the crowds, somehow it was dropped over the side of the boat. But to the amazement of all, the basket floated instead of sinking! Even the Moslems commented that the person who owned the basket must have been a just man for it not to sink, or else that there was something holy in it. What joy there was at the recovery of the basket! Later the icon was taken back to Procopion for safekeeping.

Many times the icon would knock -- a phenomenon often associated with icons among devout Greeks. This usually happened when the lamp would go out, or when the family was to receive news or a letter. (The icon still is heard to knock on various occasions in the Monastery where it is now kept.) At the destruction of Asia Minor in 1924, the pilgrim-grandmother Macrina took the icon as her only possession and left her village. Most people, when they became refugees, would take clothes and other goods, but many pious persons would take as their sole possession their beloved icons. After many years the pilgrim-grandmother settled in Detroit, Michigan, where her daughter was living, and the icon was kept in the icon-corner of the home. Even in Detroit, the icon continued to knock many times, and this was witnessed by many, including a child who used to vsit the pilgrim-grandmother.

Every year she and the little boy would scrub and polish the cover (riza) of the icon until it shone. After many years this young boy became a monk, and once in a far away place he was in indecision concerning a certain spiritual matter, and he prayed concerning it. He prayed especially to the Holy Mother of God to be enlightened as to what he should do. The next day would dawn as the Annunciation of the Holy Mother of God. After the Vigil, towards daybreak, the monk sat on the floor and leaned his back against the wall to take a little rest. As soon as he closed his eyes, he fell into a light sleep still in that sitting position. Whereupon he found himself in a place full of much light -- bright light. And there he saw the Holy Mother of God holding our Saviour as a child, both with much joyfulness. Beside them was standing the

Great Martyr Menas in shining silver armor, also smiling and beaming with gladdening joy. They looked most kindly and compassionately toward the monk. He then immediately woke up. The monk began to ponder afterwards how it was that the Great Martyr Menas, whom he had not remembered for many years in his prayers, had appeared to him. Only then did he remember how as a child and a young boy he used to polish his silver cover every year. Therefore the Saint had appeared, smiling at him as with thanks, bringing joy and comfort of heart to the monk. From this appearance he came to a decision concerning the matter he was undecided about.

It was only that following summer that the pilgrim-grandmother, during a visit of the monk to her home, said to him, "Please take the icon of St. Menas, for I am very old now and I will die, and thus you will commemorate me." The monk said to her, "Wait, wait, grandmother, and after you die, then I will take the icon." "No, no," she said, "for you shall not see your grandmother again; and after I die who knows what will become of the icon?" (And true enough, she reposed some time after this, and the monk did not see her again in this world alive.) So at that time he took the icon with him. Now it is kept in the *trapeza* of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston, Mass.

THE QUESTION OF
THE ORTHODOX CALENDAR

Among those causes which have introduced lamentable divisions within the Orthodox Church in this century, one of the most serious has been the uncanonical adoption in 1924 by the Church of Constantinople and a few other Churches of the Gregorian Calendar. The Slavic Churches to this day have refused to follow this example, and the voice of protest within the Greek Church has been so strong that the New Calendar Church has been forced into the position of persecutor of the large number of clergy and faithful who have remained true to Orthodox tradition.

The two letters that follow, occasioned by recent requests in Europe and America, reveal some of the reasons for their faithfulness. The first, printed in full, is by the Greek priest who is head of the French-language Swiss Orthodox community of Geneva; the second, consisting of two excerpts giving vivid illustrations of the issue, is by an American of Greek ancestry, a monk at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston. Both communities, significantly, have found refuge in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

I

Molosmes, April 2 (15), 1967

To the Editor,
Le Lumignon qui fume
Geneva

Sir:

The newspaper *Le Monde* has asked me to supply a short explanation of the Old Calendar issue for its readers. I should be grateful if you would give me a simple and brief reply that will be comprehensible to non-Orthodox. Thanking you in advance, please accept my devotion in the Church of Christ,

Elias Rouart

Dear brother in Christ according to our common Faith, Elias:

Thank you for your letter of April 2(15). I am answering you publicly, since the instruction and edification of the faithful is of more concern to me than the opinion of the readers of *Le Monde*. I cannot adapt my answer to "those without" and "those within." I do not speak from a "double heart" and I do not look for "the glory of men"; therefore I have but one answer for all. Everyone will understand it according to his place in the plan of God's economy. That many will say *This is a hard saying, who can hear it?* (John 6:60) is inevitable. I think, then, that rather than satisfying the curiosity of the inquisitive, it is better to "redeem the time" by making the brethren steadfast in our most holy Faith, so that, "the one edifying the other," we may with great reason face up to the demands of the Word of God.

Today the faithful are passing through a great crisis -- a crisis that according to the warning of our Saviour Christ will become increasingly worse as the end approaches. For as Satan knows he has only a short time, so much the more does he seek to mislead *even the elect, if possible* (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22). This too is a hard saying, but then the whole Gospel is a series of hard sayings for those who are "slow to hear."

Many believers think in good faith that the question of the calendar and of the Church feasts is of secondary importance, if indeed it has any meaning at all. They even cite Biblical texts like this one from the Apostle Paul: *Let no man judge you... in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days...* " (Col. 2:16) or again: *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain*" (Gal. 4:10).

Let us not forget, however, that it is to our profit if we clap our hand over our mouth like Abba Kopri whenever we quote texts from Scripture, especially if we are not rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Here the Apostle is condemning the ritualists of his day (and they exist in every period), *i.e.*, those who having confined their religious life to outward tokens of worship made them the conditions of salvation. With these misguided people what is outside themselves has no relation to what is inside; the ritual form does not correspond to an inner spiritual reality; and they pass off counterfeit money, seeking to justify themselves in ignorance of the Grace of Christ.

This does not mean, however, that someone who has tasted the Grace of Christ is an unruly believer who forgets that "God is not a God of disorder and confusion, but of order and peace," and who con-

sequently acts as he pleases rather than as one organ in a single body. No organ of the body operates by itself, but each operation of every organ (ear, foot, eye, etc.) requires the simultaneous and harmonious operation of all the functions of the other organs. Look at the Apostle Paul himself -- pre-eminently the Apostle and preacher of Grace, and who is quoted above -- with what obedience and piety did he submit to the regulations of the Jewish faithful, -- how he made prayers, cut his hair, undertook a long journey to be present at Jerusalem and worship on the day of Pentecost! Why did he not stay in Corinth, since the Lord is no longer worshipped at Jerusalem, or on Mt. Garisim, but "in spirit and in truth"? Why should he wish to celebrate Pentecost in the spring and not celebrate it in the autumn, for example, when he would be going to Jerusalem on other business anyway? See where he himself keeps "days, and months, and times"! Let us then be very careful when we quote the Divine and Sacred Scripture.

These days, even from those who occupy high places in the Church, we hear various slogans that disquiet us. *E.g.*, "Today's problems are new, and these new problems demand new solutions." Space does not permit me to amplify this point, but simply to emphasize that slogans for *aggiornamento*, for "bringing the Church up to date," are heresies and diabolical traps. Man's need is always one and the same, and has not changed from the time he lost the Presence of God. Man's sole and principle need -- a matter of life and death -- is to find his God again. If this need is not satisfied, all other satisfactions are ersatz goods of the worst quality, which only create need upon need in a vicious circle; and like the woman with the issue of blood people will pay out money hand over fist to so-called "doctors" with no result, because they have still not approached the fringe of His garment and felt the power issuing from it. Truth neither grows old nor becomes outdated, neither goes out of style; it never requires revision or "modernizing" -- *aggiornamento*. Truth is God, and thus it always remains timely and unchanging.

However, we shall never help the faithful find God and the truth by coddling the laziness and the torpor of our "deceitful and corrupted heart," which asks nothing more than to sink itself even further into that torpor and get itself even further away from its Creator and Savior. And certainly it is not by cutting down on the fasts, by holding monasticism in contempt, by being ignorant of the Church feasts, not by "This doesn't matter," "That's outdated," and a third "It does not appeal to to the twentieth-century taste" that we shall be roused from our sluggishness and made aware of the risks we are running

That "Never mind" and that "It's not important" are tiny cracks in the dyke through which the ocean will one day overwhelm us all. Look at the Orthodox Finns. At first the new-calendarists promised everyone that at least they would leave the Paschal cycle of Feasts in its traditional place. See them now, however; they did not stop there. They changed the Paschal cycle too. The Feast of feasts, the Solemnity of solemnities, they no longer celebrate with us, their brethren in our common Faith, but with the Occidentals. They no longer read the same daily Gospel with us, they no longer chant hymns of the same tone. Many people will tell me that in the beginning Pascha was not celebrated simultaneously in the East and West even though at that time both were still one, and will bring up other similar arguments, *all taken completely out of context*. I am neither a theologian nor a learned man, but I do know that to keep Pascha with the Occidentals and to communicate from the same chalice both come to one and the same thing. Those who regard us as backward or as fanatics do so because unfortunately they think of Orthodoxy as a mere ideology, as being a theory like any other product of the brain, and not as a heart that has *a single heart beat*. For those of us who are backward, however, Orthodoxy is a heart-beat, the pulse of life that circulates through the whole man in all of his expressions (body-spirit-soul). We believe (even if others think we are out of our mind) that the very hairs on the head of someone who *lives* Orthodoxy are different from those of people who are not Orthodox.

As I will try to explain further on, the way in which the new calendar has been adopted shakes the fundamental notions and principles of the Church of Christ, the single Body which the Lord has purchased at the cost of His own Blood, and which He founded and consecrated on the day of Pentecost.

1. *The question of astronomical accuracy*. The new calendarists allege that they do not follow the Gregorian (papal) religious calendar, but that they have "corrected" the Orthodox Julian calendar so as to keep it from being in astronomical error. Thus their newly-published liturgical books carry the note, "According to the corrected Julian calendar." In reality, however, it is a matter of adopting the Gregorian religious calendar of the West. Today it is well-known that, astronomically considered, both calendars are faulty. If the new calendarists really wish for the astronomical correction of the calendar, then why do they not rectify it on the basis of the most recent data of astronomical science, instead of adopting the religious calendar of Rome, which, as it happens, is also astronomically wrong? How is the calendar being corrected? The new-calendarists tell us waggishly: "Ah, but with your calendar, pretty soon

we'd be having Christmas in August!" They would do better not to purvey their wit so cheaply. Nowhere is it written that we have to have snow to celebrate Christ's Nativity. And let us not forget that when we here celebrate the Nativity with snow, our Orthodox brethren in Australia and elsewhere, *who are keeping the feast at the same time we do*, find themselves at the height of summer. Let us not make frivolous judgements, then, and let us not be "children in understanding" but "babes in malice" (I Cor. 14:20) And if we wished to be witty in turn, we would remind you that before we have Christmas in August, it is quite likely that Christ will already have come. Instead of changing times and seasons, we had better get ready for His coming and leave astronomy in the observatory. Astronomy really should be at the service of the Church in any case, and not the Church given over to astronomical balancing-acts. For a believer, time has a completely different meaning from that indicated by the motion of the stars. For the believer, past, present, and future are harmoniously fused, because in Christ Jesus we abandon human temporal limits and even from this very present are tasters of heavenly things.

2. *The unity of the Church.* I said above that the Church of Christ is a single Body; and the Apostle says of the organs of this single Body that "if one organ suffers, all the other organs suffer with it; if one organ rejoices, all the other organs rejoice with it." So then even in our worship, it is as one entire Body that the Church rejoices, mourns, or celebrates, depending on the occasion; whereas now that the new-calendarists heve allegedly "corrected" the calendar, at the moment when some are celebrating the Saviour's Nativity, others are still in the midst of the fast. Thus we ask: is it really worthwhile to change a calendar that was instituted by Ecumenical Synods, with which our fathers were made Saints, with which the Martyrs shed their blood, and with which the Church has lived for twenty centuries?-- is it really worth the trouble to change it for another alleged to be astronomically more exact (though it too is in error), and thus to shatter this wonderful unity, and to create confusion and division and disorder in the flock? Since the Orthodox conscience has rejected the Gregorian calendar -- because we must not forget that the new-calendarists constitute a mere fraction of the Orthodox, scarcely ten per cent, while ninety per cent follow the calendar of the Fathers, and keep Pascha and its related feasts (in the Tridion and the Pentecostarion) according to the ancient reckoning -- we ask: Who in fact are the ones disturbing the peace, mutual understanding, and

concord of the Church? -- the fanatical and backward old-calendarists, or the "liberal" and "progressive" new-calendarists? Who in fact are the ones who raise disputes and create problems where they do not exist? Who in fact are the ones preoccupied with "days and times and years"? We, the backward and fanatic old-calendarists, we do not deify days and calendars, nor do we regard one day as "holier" than another because of something in the nature of that particular day. We believe that the *Church*, if there is a reason, can move a feast to another date, and we have innumerable examples of the Church's doing so. However, first, there must be a good reason for such a change; secondly, it must not disrupt the Church's unity and order; thirdly, it must be done freely and without coercion by the Church as a whole; and fourthly, it must not be done simply in a spirit of "modernizing" or just to copy others.

3. *Liturgical unity*. I have spoken of liturgical unity. It is appropriate here to remind ourselves of various examples of ecclesiastical disorder proceeding from the partial adoption of the Gregorian calendar:

-- There is no unity of feast and fast, as we have seen above.

-- The fast of the Holy Apostles is reduced, and often is simply eliminated when Pascha comes late.

-- The feast of St. George often falls inside the Great Lent and has to be transferred to the Monday after Pascha.

-- The Kyriakodromion, or series of Biblical readings, is altered on account of the intercalation of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross; *i.e.*, whereas previously all Orthodox read the same passage from the Bible every day in the Church services, disorder has reached such a point that now they do not.

If I were a specialist, I could enumerate other irregularities, but these ought to suffice.

4. *The question of papal arbitrariness*. As everybody knows, the occupant of the Roman See, through his schism and heresy, has cut himself off from the Body of the Church of Christ. Holding himself superior to councils, even to the Ecumenical Synods, and in consequence of this heretical view, he deemed it good, in the 16th century, to change the calendar by his own volition and without the consent of the Church. The Roman pontiff acts according to his own views; but the Church of Christ, judging his views and acts to be incompatible with the facts of Orthodox catholic dogma, condemns them and also the matter of the calendar. This "New" or "Gregorian" or "Papal" calendar was outlawed and anathematized by the Synodal Tome of a Council held long ago in Constantinople [in 1587 and again in 1593].

If the incumbent of Rome really loved the Church of Christ more than his own system, he would first reunite himself, through repentance and profession of the Orthodox Faith, to the Church of Christ from which he has cut himself off, and then offer his opinion on the calendar to the Church and submit to her judgement, as the rest of us Orthodox do.

Certainly those who hold the current "ecumenical" views will ridicule what we have said as being antiquated and out of date. Let them not forget, however, that these upstart theories of theirs, since they are not on the side of Tradition, will all collapse sooner or later, and the prophetic word will again be heard: *For from the least of them even to the greatest they have all committed iniquity; from the priest even to the false prophet they have all wrought falsely. And they healed the breach of my people, making light of it, and saying 'Peace, peace': and where is peace? They were ashamed because they failed; yet they were not ashamed as those who are truly ashamed, and they knew not their own disgrace: therefore shall they utterly fall when they do fall, and in the time of visitation shall they perish, said the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths of the Lord; and see what is the good way, and walk in it, and ye shall find purification for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in them'* (Jer. 6:13-16).

5. *The question of hierarchical arbitrariness.* In the Orthodox Church the only Leader is Christ, and His Delegate on earth is the Holy Spirit. No bishop or patriarch is regarded as the leader of the Church of Christ on earth, and none of them can make a decisive judgement regarding a question that concerns the whole Church, as, *e.g.*, that of worship does. Nor can any local Church adopt a different line from that of the Church as a whole. If, for example, there is an urgent need to change the religious calendar, a Pan-Orthodox Synod -- that is, an Ecumenical Synod -- must be called in which all the local Orthodox Churches can participate freely. Only such a Synod can be regarded as *competent* to make decisions and ordinances about such a matter.

When, however, a single hierarch or a single local Church wilfully and incompetently makes a decision of this sort, it is obvious that the synodical foundations of the Orthodox Church are being shaken, and that precedents are being set that will have disastrous results in the future.

6. *The question of the relations between Church and state.* I do not have space here to treat so thorny a subject. However, it cannot be doubted that in the matter of changing the calendar, politics and diplomacy have played the greatest role -- influences most detrimental to a *free and living*

Church. Nevertheless, the Churches of Jerusalem, of Russia, of Bulgaria, of Serbia, and the Holy Mountain of Athos, among others, keep to the Orthodox Julian calendar of the Fathers, regardless of the commercial calendar, which does not concern us. And it is to our shame and their credit that the Moslems and the Jews keep their religious calendars inviolate, whereas we Orthodox, the *one* Church of Christ on earth, we who are the depositaries of the Truth revealed to the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Fathers, -- we let ourselves be borne and carried about by every blast of the winds of Western innovation.

Do you see then, brother, how many issues the calendar question raises? To what degree non-Orthodox can or cannot comprehend them, I do not know.

With love in the Lord,
Father Basil

Translated from Fr. Basil Sakkas, "La question du calendrier Orthodoxe," in *La Foi transmise*, May, 1967, pp. 5-11, published by the priest of the Swiss Orthodox community ("St. Nectarios of Aegina") of Geneva. *Le Lumignon qui fume* is the official organ of the same community.

The following excerpts are from a letter by a monk at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston explaining the calendar issue to an Orthodox American doctor in the Midwest. They reveal a striking sign of God's grace to those who remain faithful to His ways, as well as two edifying examples of the confusions and divisions which the use of the new calendar by some Churches still causes.

....Many signs and wonders from God also took place among the people, so that it might become clear that our Lord Himself did not disdain to be found among simple and unlettered, but fervent and faithful souls. ... One of the most astounding signs from God took place during the all-night vigil for the feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross, in the year 1925. In the little country chapel of St. John the Theologian at the base of Mt. Hymettus (which is now within the city limits of Athens), over 2000 people had gathered to celebrate the feast according to the old calendar reckoning. When Archbishop Papadoupoulos [of Athens] got wind of it, he sent a message to the Minister of Interior Affairs, who in turn sent the police to disperse the crowd and arrest the priest. When the police arrived and saw the size of the crowd, they became fearful of starting a scene with such a multitude, and they decided to wait until the morning to arrest the priest.

At midnight, just when the procession for Litya was taking place, the people who were standing outside in the court of the little chapel suddenly saw a giant Cross forming in the heavens directly above their heads. The Cross, which was lying horizontally, stretched from the little chapel to above the peak of Mt. Hymettus, and was in the form of a Byzantine Cross, with three straight cross-bars. When the people saw it -- it was most brilliant and radiant in appearance -- they all cried out in fear. The procession and the service came to a stop, and the people fell on their knees weeping and chanting *Kyrie eleison*. For a half hour the Cross remained thus in the sky and then slowly began to raise itself until it finally stood straight up and down, and then it slowly disappeared. The next day the Athenian newspapers printed a full report with sketches showing how the Cross appeared. Such a sign has not occurred since the vision of St. Constantine, and also since the year 346, when the Cross was seen in the heavens stretching from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives, when St. Cyril was bishop of Jerusalem....

The Jerusalem Patriarchate is especially interested in settling the calendar issue because of its position as a place of pilgrimage. For example: When Patriarch Athenagoras met Pope Paul in Jerusalem, he went afterwards to Bethlehem to attend the service for Christmas (which is celebrated according to the old calendar there. Keep in mind that he had already celebrated Christmas with the new calendar in Constantinople). In the meantime the new calendarists, by the time Athenagoras returned to Constantinople, had already celebrated Epiphany. In other words, Athenagoras himself, because of this calendar confusion, celebrated two Christmases but did not celebrate Epiphany that year.

Also, many pious pilgrims come from Greece to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem, not knowing that the Jerusalem Patriarchate follows the old calendar. They arrive in Bethlehem and discover that it is only St. Spiridon's day and that Christmas is two weeks away. They have only arranged to stay for a few days, and few are those who have made the provisions or have the money to wait two weeks. In their dismay, they beg the priests there to chant a few Christmas troparia and, of course, the priests refuse, because not only is it not Christmas according to their reckoning, but they are also in the midst of the fast. The pilgrims return to Greece confused and disheartened since they did not get to celebrate Christmas, even in Bethlehem, and Christmas has already been celebrated in Greece. Therefore that year they do not celebrate Christmas anywhere. This happens yearly there...

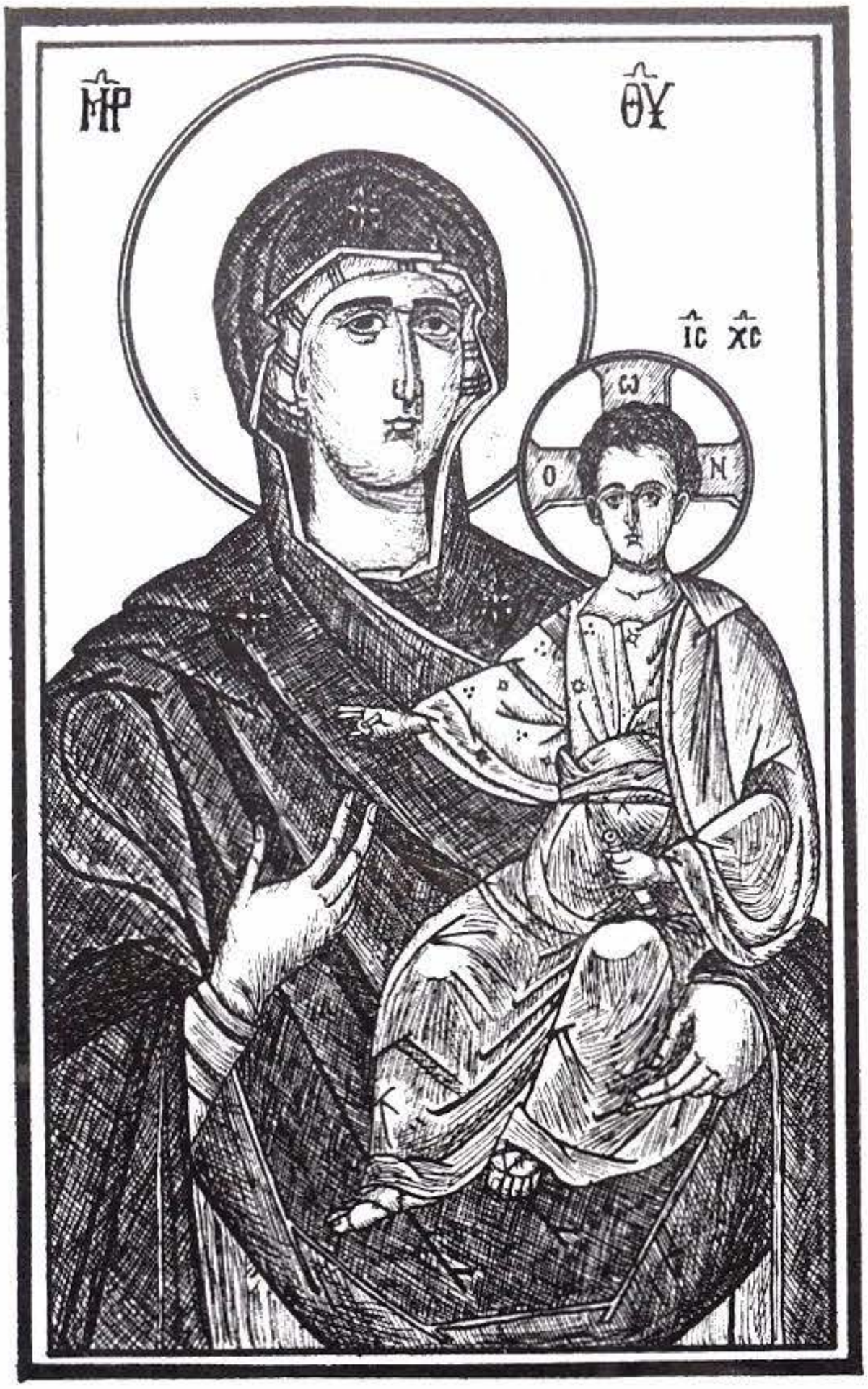
THE MIRACULOUS ICONS
OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

THE THEOTOKOS "OF THE AKATHIST" AND THE ZOGRAPHOU MONASTERY MARTYRS

The following written account exists in the Sacred Monastery of Zographou on Mt. Athos

BEFORE THE COUNCIL of Florence with its unfortunate outcome, the West sought with all her means to draw to herself the East which was then shaken by political circumstances. Even the Emperor Michael Palaelogos himself cooperated with the West in this effort, to keep the oath he had given to Pope Gregory X, after the blinding of John Lascaris and the seizure of his throne, which took place during the thirteenth century.

John Beccos, who was Patriarch [of Constantinople] at that time, acting in agreement with this apostate counsel and purpose of the Emperor, subjected the Eastern Church to the see of Rome at the Second Council of Lyons. This had disastrous results for the Eastern Church, since the Latins persuaded the Orthodox to adopt their error not by the power of the word of the Gospel, but with the naked sword and all manner of violence and afflictions. Hence thousands of victims fell by their sword for the purity of Eastern Orthodoxy. But because the Holy Mountain always was and is the beacon and foundation of the suffering Eastern Church, the Latins, so that they might destroy these foundation-stones of Orthodoxy, invaded it too, persuading with wodsr, beguiling with money and promises, and forcing with threats and tyrannical force even to martyrdom, so that the authority of the Pope of Rome might be recognized even on the Holy Mountain. A few of the fainthearted were



THE ZOGRAPHOU MOTHER OF GOD
"OF THE AKATHIST"
Commemorated with the Zographou Martyrs
on October 10

persuaded by violence and money, or with fear of tortures and death, and became deniers of the Orthodoxy of their and of our Fathers. But the majority of them sealed their confession with their own blood, and by their steadfastness censured the Pope for his sacrilegious assuming of the title "Vicar of Christ," Who Himself alone was, is, and shall be the Head of His holy Church. Unfortunately, however, the unfortunate Lavra and the Monastery of Xeropotamou fell and turned away from the teachings of our Fathers and received the Westerners with honor and with servile fear. This took place, certainly, because the Emperor co-operated with the Latins to turn aside the monks of the Holy Mountain to the false doctrines of Rome.

Yet God, even in order that the rest might be established in Orthodoxy of faith, punished the Monastery of Xeropotamou at the very time those unfortunate monks were celebrating their abominable Liturgy,[1] with newly-introduced Latin innovations, with the Westerners. For the supports and fortifications of the Monastery of Xeropotamou were shaken to their very foundations and fell, so that many of the Latins, and many of those monks who had fallen away and had become of one mind with them, were crushed under the falling walls -- at the very time they were celebrating their ungodly Liturgy! Because of their madness, the rest of those who had come from distant Italy gave no heed at all to this manifest condemnation from heaven, and scattered throughout the entire Holy Mountain, seeking to find new victims of their error and of eternal perdition and corruption.

In this dreadful and fearsome time for the Holy Mountain, in the environs of the Monastery of Zographou there was a monk struggling by himself who had the holy custom of reading the Akathist Hymn many times during the day before this divine Icon.

One day, when the archangelic greeting to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, "Rejoice!" was ceaselessly sounding on the lips of this elder, suddenly he heard from this holy Icon the following words: "Rejoice thou also, O elder of God!" The elder became terrified. "Fear not," quietly continued the voice of the Mother of God, coming from the Icon, "but go quickly to the Monastery and announce to the brothers and the abbot that the enemies both of My Son and of Me are approaching. Whoever is weak in spirit, let him hide in patience until the temptation passes. But let them who aspire to martyric crowns remain in the Monastery. Go quickly, then." The elder then obeyed the voice and wish of our All-pure Lady and, leaving his cell, ran as quickly as he could to the Monastery in order to give the brothers means and time for each of them to inspirit himself and soberly to think of the approaching danger. But just as the elder reached the gate of the Monastery, behold, standing at the gate he saw the holy Icon of the Mother of God that had been in his cell, before which he had been reading the Akathist only a little earlier and from which he had heard the voice. At this, with

1. The Roman Mass. At Great Lavra, during the Latin Mass a black mist enveloped the entire Monastery. Those monks of Lavra who took part in the Mass did not decay when they died, but rather became hideously blackened and bloated. They are entombed in the Cave of the Wicked Dead in the coastal cliff face in the area of the Roumanian skete of the Holy Forerunner (Prodromou). See: *The Monks of Athos*, by R. M. Dawkins; *Athos, the Holy Mountain*, by Sydney Loch; and *Athos, the Mountain of Silence*, by Philip Sherrard (Tr. Note.)

compunction and reverence he fell down before it. After he had venerated the Icon, he took it and thus appeared with it before the abbot. When the brethren heard of the approaching danger, they were greatly troubled. The weaker of them hid quickly in the mountains and caves. But twenty-six monks -- among them the abbot -- remained in the Monastery and went into the tower, awaiting their enemies and martyric crowns. After a little while the Latins also came and at first, with all the power of the eloquence of the Westerners, incited the monks to open the gates of the Monastery to them and recognize the Pope as head of the universal Church. At the same time they promised them the mercy of the Pope himself, and a great quantity of gold. But from the tower the monks asked the Latins, saying, "And who told you that your Pope is the head of the Church? From whence is this teaching of yours? With us, the Head of the Church is Christ! It is easier for us to decide to die rather than to let this sacred place be defiled by your violence and tyranny. We shall not open the gates of the Monastery! Depart from hence!" The Latins cried out furiously, "Die then!" And immediately they gathered a large amount of dry sticks and wood around the tower and set fire to them. The flame rose high and spread into the air, but the monks did not in the least yield from their spiritual boldness. They glorified and blessed the Lord, and while they prayed for their enemies they surrendered their pure souls unto Him in peace on the tenth of October in the year 1274.

The names of these prize-winners and righteous martyrs are written in the codex of the Monastery of Zographou and in the Bulgarian *Horologion*.

The holy Icon, from which the elder heard the voice of the Mother of God warning the monks of Zographou Monastery of the approach of Her enemies, was in the tower with the righteous Martyrs. But afterwards it was found undamaged under the ruins of the fire.

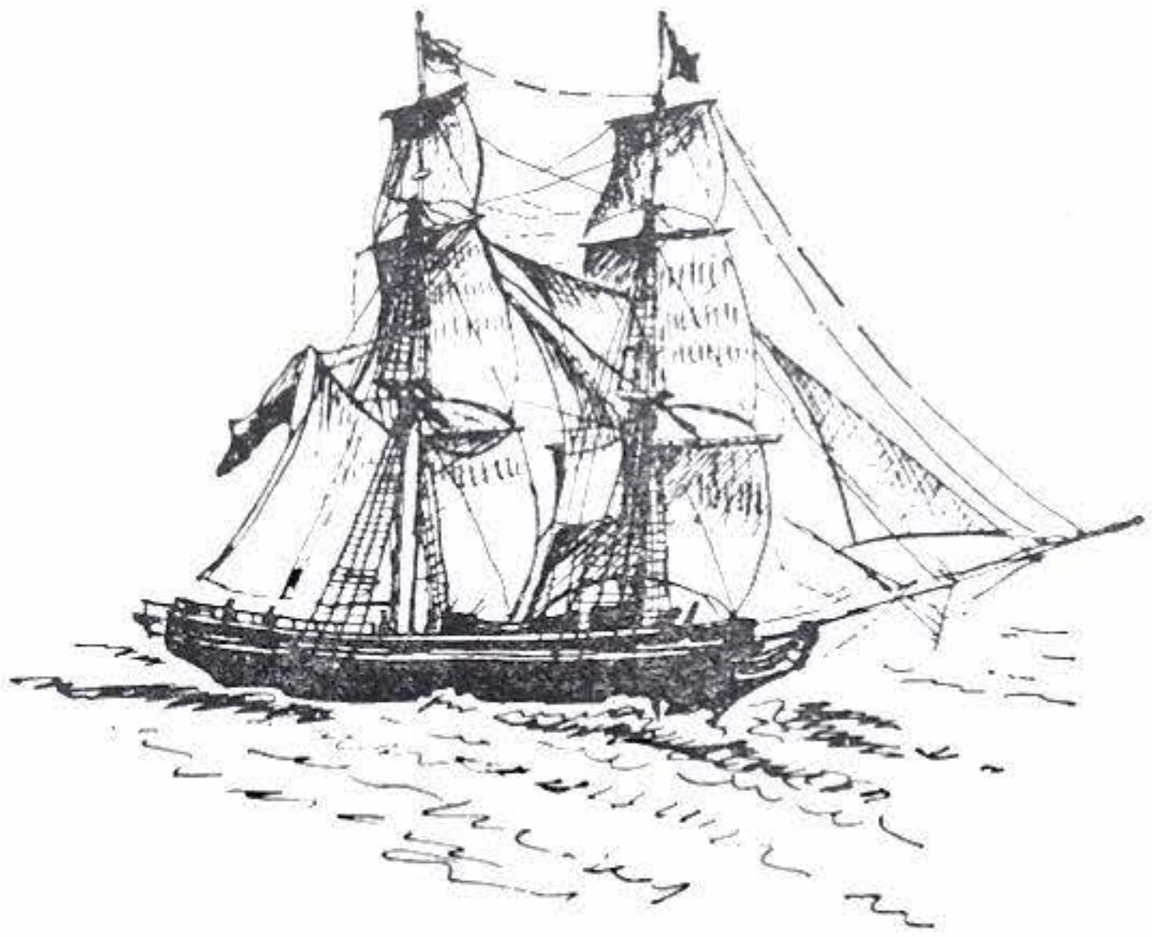
In commemoration of this miracle they placed the holy Icon in the temple of the Repose of the Mother of God, on the iconostasis. And a vigil lamp quietly sheds a small but continuous and never-extinguished light before the countenance of the Virgin Mother of God. This holy icon of the Mother of God is very dark and seems to have been restored. By the Bulgarian monks it is known by the name of *Haerovo* (that is to say: She who was addressed by the salutation *Haere* -- Rejoice), and the place where the wondrous revelation was made kown to the elder is likewise even to this day called *Haerovo*. Moreover, the icon is called

"She who forewarns"; and instead of the communion hymn in the sacred Liturgies of this chapel the Bulgarian fathers read the Akathist Hymn before this Icon.

The following miracle, by which God glorified His Martyrs six centuries after their suffering, as a sign even to our own age, is recorded in the official Mount Athos Patericon *(in Russian), Moscow, 1897, Part II, pp. 249-50.*

A part of the tower in which the holy Martyrs suffered stood until 1873; but since it covered a newly-erected building at the north side of the Monastery, and likewise since it was ready to collapse from age, it became necessary to tear it down. However, so as not to forget the place on which the Saints had performed their martyric labor, and for the better preservation of their memory, the brothers of the Monastery of Zographou unanimously expressed the desire to build a memorial on this site. Through the zeal of the brothers a memorial began quickly to be raised; it was finished in the same year of 1873, and all awaited with joy the day of the commemoration of the Saints [October 10], when it was intended to consecrate this memorial.

Finally the eve of the awaited feast arrived, and in the main church of the Monastery the All-night Vigil began, according to custom, in the first hour after sunset. The night was quiet and there was no moon; there shone only the faint light of stars. At midnight, when after the first kathisma of matins the "Life and Suffering of the Saints" was being read, there was suddenly heard in the church a slight noise, and at the same time there appeared above the church a pillar of fire which illumined the Monastery and nearby places with such a strong light that it was possible to distinguish not only nearby but even distant objects. This wondrous pillar, having remained standing over the church for a few minutes, moved to the memorial and stopped above it, and then began to ascend, and finally turned into a ring, as if crowning the memorial and the place on which the holy Martyrs had performed their martyric labor. Thus was the wondrous sign accomplished, having continued for as long as fifteen minutes, witnessed by many of the brethren and those who had come for the feast. Those who saw this miracle glorified God, Who had glorified His Saints; to Him from us also may there be honor and glory forever. Amen.



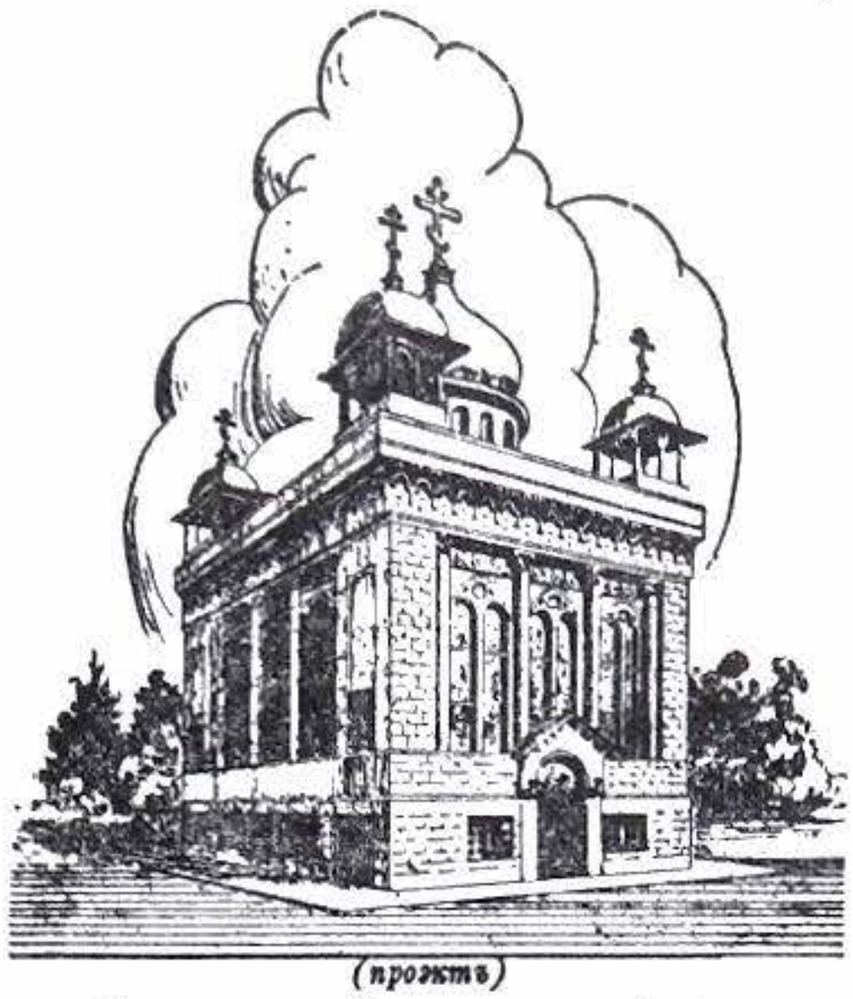
A PILGRIMAGE TO
THE ORTHODOX

HOLY PLACES OF AMERICA

THE EIGHTH PILGRIMAGE

JUST A FEW BLOCKS AWAY from the site where the first Orthodox Divine Liturgy was celebrated in San Francisco is the location of the first Orthodox convent in America. Although nearly a century separates the settling of the Russian Orthodox nuns in the Mission district, and the first Divine Liturgy held in the home of a pious Serbian family, nevertheless there is a spiritual ccnnection... Located on the corner of Capp and 19th Streets (3365 19th Street), just off Mission Street, is a large gray edifice which like a bastion protects these nun-warriors in their spiritual battle. This is a pioneer regiment, the first to bring and firmly establish on American soil Orthodox active monasticism for women. The nuns brought with them their own particular weapon, unheard of in the New World, which was entrusted to them by the Holy Virgin Herself in order to illuminate with it the near-heathen American West. This weapon, their treasure, is the living miracle of Renewed Icons, some of which are still in the process of miraculously renewing themselves. The meaning of this objective, God-given sign is the same as the earthly mission of Orthodox Christianity itself -- the renewal of men through repentence, so that God's grace may abide in them, reflecting paradise in its light.

Historically this alone constitutes a whole chapter in the story of Holy Orthodoxy in America...



(прожтъ)

ХРА́МЪ БОГОРО́ДИЦЕ-ВЛАДИ́МІРСКОЙ
ЖЕ́НСКОЙ ОБИ́ТЕЛИ ВЪ САНЪ ФРАНЦИСКО.
19 ЛИНІЯ УГОЛЪ КАППЪ.

CONVENT OF THE VLADIMIR MOTHER OF GOD

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

No matter what sorrow might befall you,
no matter what sickness might strike you,
no matter how unbearable your family life might be,
or how unstable your position at work --
in all these circumstances turn to the Queen of Heaven,
and with tears beg Her help, and She,
our Sovereign Lady, will hear you and help you in everything.
Remember, that for Her there is nothing impossible,

Abbess Rufina's Testament

RUFINA was the monastic name of a young and energetic abbess (Olga Kokoreva in the world) who was appointed in 1911 to head a newly-reorganized convent in Chardin, Siberia. Her personal spiritual life was patterned after the majority of monastics at the turn of the century, when Russia was experiencing perhaps the peak of its spiritual attainment. The Blessed Mother Rufina entered a convent at the early age of sixteen and was zealously preparing herself for the quiet and contemplative life of a recluse. But, guided in invisible ways by her special patron, the Righteous Simeon of Verkhotursk (a 17th-century Siberian saint), she was destined, after undergoing trials in fleeing the Communists, to become the abbess of a multitudinous flock of nuns and orphans, to found a series of monastic communities in large cities, and finally, at the close of her life, to hold an icon which was miraculously renewed in her hands by the grace of God before the eyes of many people.

THE RENEWED MIRACLEWORKING VLADIMIR MOTHER OF GOD

AT THE DAWN of Christianity God, through His true servants, worked great, almost incredible miracles whereby the Faith has grown and increased in strength throughout the whole of the Christian era. So also before the end of the world God will show the world great miracles to aid the faithful and so that the wavering may freely choose eternal blessedness or damnation. Very likely as an indication of the beginning of the end, great miracles have taken place in this century. In Russia, for example, after the fall of the Orthodox Monarchy, an astonishing number of icons were miraculously renewed -- and not only icons, but also crucifixes, whole frescoed walls of churches, even huge church domes. In the twenties this wave of miraculous renewal spread to Manchuria, where the miracle has been repeated many times right up to the present time. Abundantly was the grace of God

ABBESS RUFINA

outpoured upon the convent of Abbess Rufina, who by this time had reached a great spiritual height. Less than a year before the first miracle, during a severe attack of her ailment, she was granted visions of Heaven, during which she exclaimed: "O poor mankind! Of what are you depriving yourself? O Lord, send me any kind of suffering, only do not deprive me of this joy..."[1] And this vision, the sensing of Heaven, was, as it were, reflected in the miracle of renewed icons, which now number twenty-two.

The renewal of icons at the Convent began on Tuesday of the first week of Great Lent in 1925, when a dark icon of the Mother of God "Of the Akathist" became light. A priest was asked to serve a moleben before it, but he, lacking faith, expressed doubt whether it had ever been dark; soon after this it became dark once more. Abbess Rufina remarked that it had become covered with the *soot of unbelief*, but she prophesied that before the renewal of Russia it too would be again renewed.

1. See the biography of Abbess Rufina, published (in Russian) by the Convent in Shanghai in 1948, p. 62.

And then on the feast day of the Vladimir Mother of God (August 26 old style) in the same year, while Abbess Rufina was taking into her hands an old, dark Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God, intending to give it as a consolation to an imprisoned man -- suddenly the icon began by itself to grow lighter, the colors became brighter, and in a moment it was turned into a bright new icon. Soon it began to produce miraculous healings, which continue to this day.

One of these remarkable cases occurred in Harbin shortly after the renewal of the Icon. Mrs. A. Waitik suffered from a large, bloody swelling in her eye. The night before she was to have had her eye removed, she saw a dream. A voice urged her to go to the Convent and pray before the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God. Knowing nothing about the Convent, she asked for instructions where to go and was given the address. As she approached the Convent she saw a radiant Lady Who asked what was troubling her. She told Her. Then the Mother of God made the Sign of the Cross over her eye three times and said, "Don't forget that you were healed by the Renewed Icon of the Vladimir Mother of God." She felt relief and woke up. The swelling was gone. When she started investigating about the Vladimir Icon she was amazed to find that the place was just as she had seen it in her dream.

Another great miracle occurred as recently as 1959, when, as a lady who formerly lived in the orphanage of the Convent testifies, a simple photograph of the Icon brought back to life a dead child in Caracas, Venezuela. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and her husband had just come from work when they heard a neighbor woman's screams. After knocking in vain at the door of another neighbor, she came running to their door and knocked. The lady opened the door and the neighbor threw into her arms her child, a nine-month old girl, crying, "She is dead!" The eyes of the child had rolled back; one half of her face was yellow, the other blue; her arms hung lifelessly. The lady knew well the miraculous power of the Mother of God manifested through the renewed icons. She went to her bedroom, carrying the dead child in her arms. On the wall hung a copy of the Renewed Vladimir Icon which Abbess Ariadna had sent her, a burning lamp hanging before it. Her awe-struck husband watched her. "If it were the original Icon," said the lady aloud, "I would have put it on the child, and God could, if He would, call her back to life." Then she stretched her arms, raising the dead child toward the holy Icon, and said three times with firm belief: "If You wish, O Lord, You can call her back to life." After the third time the little girl

began to cry aloud. Both the lady and her husband were dumbfounded: he, being a Protestant, would never have believed such a thing had he been told it, instead of witnessing it himself.

THE LONG-TIME DREAM of Abbess Rufina -- to transfer the Convent to the United States -- was destined to be realized only after her death. She died a righteous death on the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God in 1937, after hearing heavenly singing and church bells unheard by the mourning sisters who surrounded her. Her worthy successor, a most devoted spiritual daughter of hers, Abbess Ariadna, fulfilled her wish. First, she sent Abbess Rufina's cell-attendant, Mother Eugenia (then Eutropia), ahead to America for preparation; and then -- but only in 1948, with the war years intervening -- the rest of the sisters arrived in San Francisco (1550 Fell Street, now the Convent's chapel and guest-house). Since then the Convent has conducted a vigorous and fruitful activity of Church enlightenment. The nuns maintain three churches and the small St. Seraphim's Hermitage in Moss Beach. The first Orthodox convent in Canada is their affiliate. They operate a Russian grade school, print and publish books, supply city parishes with prosphoras (altar breads), manufacture candles. The inner life of the Convent continues the spiritual traditions and rule of Abbess Rufina.

Their spacious main church is literally filled with icons of various types, and a multitude of oil-lamps burns continually before the Renewed Icons. There are also many relics and holy objects. A small church on the balcony is dedicated to St. Dimitry of Rostov, whose renewed icon is located in its center. The church services, celebrated daily by the Convent clergy (5 priests and 2 deacons) are monastic and lengthy. Some of the standard chants, sung during services, bear traces of Siberian influence. The outward appearance of everybody and everything there speaks of quiet monastic dignity -- meekness, politeness, simplicity, concentration... The heavy sound of a big clock reminds one of the hour of death, and the compassionate glance of the Mother of God, repeated many times in the multitude of icons therein, inspires faith and courage.

The heart of the community of twenty nuns (with two skhema nuns) is the Miraculous Icon of the Vladimir Mother of God -- a Living Spring of God's Grace that pours abundantly upon receptive, contrite hearts. In the service to the Heavenly Queen Herself is concentrated both the significance and the mission of the Convent.

*Next issue: **A** Pilgrimage to the Holy Protection Skete in Alberta, Canada.*

ABBESS RUFINA

Below: Abbess Ariadna standing before two of the Renewed Icons; on the right is Mother Eugenia, who started the first Orthodox convent in America; in the middle, Mother Amvrossia, Abbess of the first convent in Canada.

FOR THE ORTHODOX MISSION
TO THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

PUBLICATION

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An Illustrated Bimonthly Magazine

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